

we had no information about the buildings and knew virtually nothing about the Jewish community that once existed here.

As we walked, we could see through iron gates, that some buildings had interior courtyards with interesting floor patterns formed by smooth black and white stones. In some courtyards, the stone patterns were intact, while in others the patterns were quite deteriorated.

We could not find the synagogue itself, but luckily, we asked directions from an elderly woman. Lucia Modiano Sulam turned out to be the keeper of the synagogue and was kind enough to guide us to it. She was a Holocaust survivor, with tattooed numbers on her forearm.

We were quite unprepared for what we found when we entered Kahal Shalom synagogue. The synagogue, in very good condition, was more elaborate than the synagogues we had seen in Athens. Crystal chandeliers hung from the ceiling. Beautiful carpets lay on the floor. The mosaic floor inside was made of the same black and white smooth stones that we had seen elsewhere. Here, the stones were arranged in more elaborate patterns. Chairs were placed on the two long sides of the interior and the wooden bimah was in the middle of the room.

Just outside the synagogue entrance is a courtyard which has a stone mosaic floor. It is well preserved.

We also visited the Jewish Museum of Rhodes, located next to the synagogue. This is a new museum in its first stage of development. Aron Hasson, a Los Angeles attorney whose family came from Rhodes, founded it. The museum currently consists of one room with white rustic walls and a curved ceiling. When we were there, the museum exhibition consisted of photographs and other printed materials.

#### TOURISM TO JEWISH SITES IN GREECE

We knew that the Jewish population in Greece had been decimated by the Holocaust, and that only remnants of that once-thriving community remains there. However, as a traveler and tourist, I have been stuck by the difficulty in obtaining information about Jewish sites and Jewish history of Greece. I do not understand why one organization or resource does not reference another. Organizations that have websites or access to the Internet should have hypertext links to other Greek Jewish organizations, including e-mail links to facilities that may not yet have a website.

There should be a list of bibliographic references about Greek Jewry and Jewish tourist sites in Greece. When we were in the Jewish Museum of Greece shop in Athens, I was stunned to find an English language book about the Jews of Ionnina (Dalven, R., *The Jews of Ioannina*, Philadelphia, 1992). I purchased the book immediately! Likewise, it was through word of mouth from both Yitzhak Kerem (publisher of the electronic newsletter *Sefarad*) and Elias Messinas (editor of *Kol haKEHILA*) that I learned of the fascinating book written by Dr. Michael Matsas entitled *The Illusion of Safety: The story of the Greek Jews During the Second World War* (New York, 1997). In reading these books and in speaking with both Messinas and Kerem whom I recently met in Jerusalem, I understand that the Greek Jews, unlike Jews in some other parts of Europe, had ample opportunity to flee or hide from the Nazis. In instance after instance the warnings of the catastrophic consequences of not fleeing or hiding were not disseminated, or the seriousness of the situation was minimized. The communication among the communities was poor.

When we visited Rhodes, we stood on its acropolis and clearly saw the Turkish coast

only 11 miles away. It was difficult to come to terms with the complacency of the Jewish population of Rhodes in 1944 that resulted in their slaughter. They were among the last Greek Jews to be sent to Auschwitz. By 1944, other communities in Greece had already been eliminated. Safety lay only eleven miles away. The Jews of the city of Rhodes did not even flee to the island's countryside. Perhaps a reader can explain this puzzling apparent fact.

The lesson today seems clear. To preserve the remnants of the Greek Jewish heritage, various interested organizations should cooperate with the another. They should use electronic hypertext links to cross-reference one another whenever possible. The Jewish Museum of Greece in Athens should have information about Jewish sites throughout Greece, including other museums, such as the one in Rhodes. Likewise, the Jewish Museum of Rhodes should link to as many Jewish sites throughout Greece as possible. Books, bibliographies and brochures about Jewish sites throughout Greece should be made available at each of the sites and at Tourist Offices. Never again should the Jewish community of Greece be weakened by poor communication among various components. Certainly, not in this age of electronic communications and the Internet. There are some dedicated people working in disparate organizations to preserve and memorialize Greek Jewish sites and culture. Now they need to recognize the gestalt effect that would result from closer cooperation.

We came away from our experience wanting to learn more about the various communities that only existed in the past, and also those which continue to survive. We hope that others will become interested in exploring and preserving Jewish heritage in Greece. The best way to do this and to attract Jewish tourists is to make information about Jewish sites more readily available. We hope that the various organizations and interested parties will work together to that end.●

#### IN RECOGNITION OF THE FOURTH BIRTHDAY OF THE PROVIDENCE GAY MEN'S CHORUS

● Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to the Providence Gay Men's Chorus, which celebrated its fourth anniversary on November 14, 1999. I would like to thank the Chorus for its four years of community involvement, during which time the members have shared not only their melodious voices with the citizens of Rhode Island, but also their hopes and ambitions for a better world.

The Providence Gay Men's Chorus, which began in 1995 as a group of eight, now has 50 members. In addition to their musical talent, one of the attributes that is most unique about the Chorus, and most appreciated, is the group's mission to promote tolerance. As we know, the real work of fostering support for people with diverse backgrounds and lifestyles usually happens slowly, and within the context of shared activities and community. The Providence Gay Men's Chorus reaches out with its concerts to expand the bounds of community. By helping to create an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding, their work benefits not only the citizens of Rhode Island, but ultimately the entire nation.

I am pleased to make it known that November 14, 1999 was not only the fourth anniversary of the Chorus, but also was declared Providence Gay Men's Chorus Day in the State of Rhode Island. Mr. President, I ask that a gubernatorial proclamation from the Governor of my home state of Rhode Island proclaiming November 14th as "Providence Gay Men's Chorus Day" be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

I join in the chorus of voices supporting the Providence Gay Men's Chorus' dual mission of creating beautiful music and promoting mutual respect and understanding. I know this talented musical group will continue its good work and I wish them many, many more birthdays.

The proclamation follows:

#### STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS—GUBERNATORIAL PROCLAMATION

Whereas, the Providence Gay Men's Chorus was first conceived in a karaoke bar in Providence in October 1995. The first meeting of its original eight members from Rhode Island and Massachusetts was held in November 1995, in a home in Pawtucket. The name Providence Gay Men's Chorus (PGMC) was decided on after some deliberation and the group was then underway with a music director and an accompanist; and,

Whereas, the mission of the PGMC is to provide and foster continuing growth of men's voices. Through the sharing of song concerts, the PGMC hopes to foster mutual understanding, tolerance and support of people with diverse backgrounds and lifestyles; and,

Whereas, the membership started to blossom during the first year and moved to St. James Episcopal Church in North Providence. During this year, the first board was also formed and the first concert was held in Warcham, Massachusetts with 12 members; and,

Whereas, the chorus kept growing and moved again. This time to the Bell Street Chapel in Providence, where the now 35-member chorus was performing two seasons per year with three concerts per season. It was at the Bell Street Chapel that the PGMC achieved their first sell out audience; and,

Whereas, as membership approached 40 members, the chorus moved once again to the First Unitarian Church in Providence. During this time, the PGMC joined the national choral organization for gay and lesbians called GALA and received its first corporate sponsorship; and,

Whereas, the chorus is now approaching its fourth birthday, has a membership of 50 and is back at the Bell Street Chapel. The members will be performing series of concerts in November, singing at First Night 2000, and initiating a scholarship program. Future plans for the chorus are to bring a program to the Hasbro's Children's Hospital, perform to mainstream audiences throughout the city and state, and attend the national GALA conferences; and,

Whereas, on November 14, 1999 the chorus will hold a concert at the Newport Congregational Church, under the direction of Charles Pietrello and the accompaniment of Bruce Ruby;

Now, therefore, I, Lincoln Almond, Governor of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, do hereby proclaim November 14, 1999, as Providence Gay Men's Chorus Day.●